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E- NEWSLETTER

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More Concerns Over Health Care Reform

This week, the Senate Finance Committee is expected to complete its work on a concept paper outlining ideas for a massive health care overhaul proposal. While there still isn't any actual language for lawmakers to review, I have several concerns about elements the committee has included in the proposed reform.



One big concern is the extra tax burden struggling families will face. In his address to the nation, President Obama said families earning less than \$250,000 a year wouldn't be subject to any tax increases; but this proposal contains a mandate for families to buy insurance. If Floridians don't comply, they will face a \$750 per person or \$1,500 per family tax penalty, paid directly to the Internal Revenue Service. That would mean adding a tax burden to working Floridians who are already struggling with the high cost of health insurance. I'm very worried about this and I hope the final proposal will not include this measure.

I'm also concerned about the rush to vote on a bill we haven't had a chance to read. We definitely need to address the problems associated with the rising costs of health care, but this reform affects every American family and represents one-sixth of our economy. I'm willing and open to work toward targeted steps broadening health care access and affordability, but I'd rather take some more time and get it right, than get it done quickly and get it wrong.

Everglades Funding Cut Harms Restoration Effort

I was very disappointed to learn last week of a \$34 million cut to Everglades funding in the fiscal year 2010 Energy and Water funding bill. This cut impacts the ongoing restoration of the Indian River Lagoon and the Site 1 Impoundment projects.

It is amazing the Federal government is eager to fund scores of new programs but can't uphold its commitment to restoring the Everglades. Florida continues to lead restoration efforts in the Everglades and the Federal government continues to shrink from its obligations and responsibilities. These projects were in the President's Budget; they have bipartisan support; and cutting them is a mistake. Ongoing restoration efforts are vital to the health of the Everglades and I will work to find alternative avenues to restore those dollars.

Commerce Committee Assignments

Last week, I received my subcommittee assignments for the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. Among the several appointments, I will now serve as the lead Republican on the committee's Competitiveness, Innovation, and Export Promotion subcommittee.

The Commerce Committee oversees transportation, communications, trade, tourism and a number of other areas critically important to Florida's economy and our overall quality of life.

I will work hard to ensure Florida's voice is heard. I look forward to these assignments, especially given Florida's economic reliance on tourism and trade. Last year, Florida's export shipments totaled \$54.2 billion. The tourism industry adds an estimated \$57 billion annually to Florida's economy. Both of these areas are responsible for hundreds of thousands of jobs and we should concentrate on removing barriers that might impede Florida's ability to compete.

Commerce subcommittee assignments:

- *Aviation Operations, Safety, Security
- *Communications, Technology, and the Internet
- *Competitiveness, Innovation, and Export Promotion (Ranking Member)
- *Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard

Thank you for taking the time to review some of the happenings in Washington. If there's something you would like to see discussed, please send me a note.